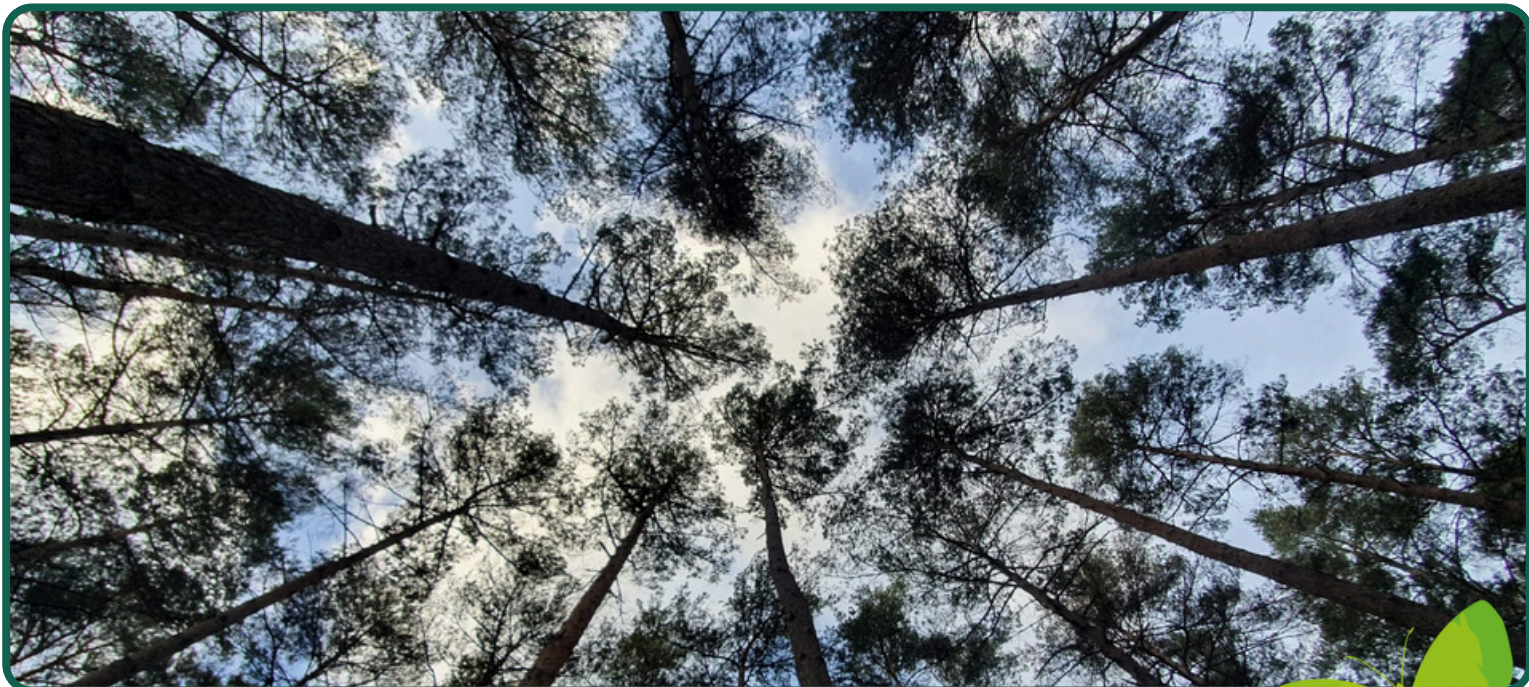




## Access Team

# Newsletter - September 2026



Before you read on, we'd like to take a moment to acknowledge a special guest making its first appearance in quite some time: RAIN.

After months of playing Mediterranean, the weather has remembered that it's British.

The arrival of rain has been met with mixed emotions. Nature will enjoy a much-needed drink, while our vegetation issues have responded by submitting a request for overtime, much to the delight of our habitats and the horror of anyone who thought the vegetation season was winding down.

**Here's the latest from across the team!**

**Drum roll please! Last month, the number of hours logged by Access team volunteers was...**

**1046!**

Thank you so much to all volunteers who help us keep the Rights of Way network open and accessible - we couldn't do it without you!

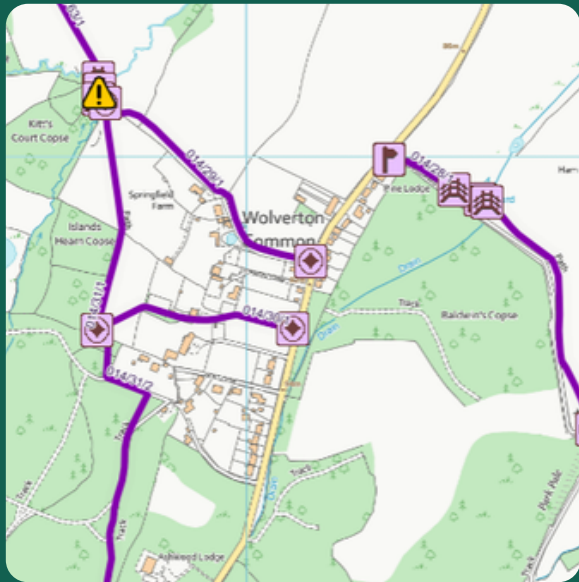




# Access Team Highlights

## North West

### Mud, Sweat and Spades Part One.



This month Ali led 6 Volunteers on a mission to tackle a long-standing surface issue in Ashford Hill.

The day's work focused on the first stage of improving drainage on the path. The team's main objective was to manually dig out a drainage ditch to assess whether it would help alleviate the persistent wet and muddy conditions and clear overhanging vegetation to open up the route and allow more light and air to reach the path.

Armed with spades, wellies, a pole saw, a brushcutter and plenty of enthusiasm, Ali, Corinne and the volunteers got straight to work.



Splitting into two groups, Ali and Katrina bravely took on the muddy ditch work, joined by Vernon and John, who helped carve out and shape the new drainage channel. Meanwhile, Team Vegetation Devastation, Barry, Jon, David and Corinne worked tirelessly to clear back encroaching vegetation.



After a well-earned break featuring cups of tea and homemade biscuits, the team returned for a second round of digging and clearing. As the ditch grew deeper, the work became more challenging, and there was even a moment of drama when Ali became stuck in the mud and had to be rescued by the team!





# Access Team Highlights

## North West

### Mud, Sweat and Spades Part One Continued.



The project marks an important first step in addressing the site's drainage issues. The next phase will involve bringing in a digger to reprofile the stream and excavate the end section of the ditch.

This will be followed by the installation of two new ditch crossings and a new gate, helping to improve access and usability for path users in the future.

A huge thank you goes to all the volunteers whose hard work and good humour made this a fantastic day.



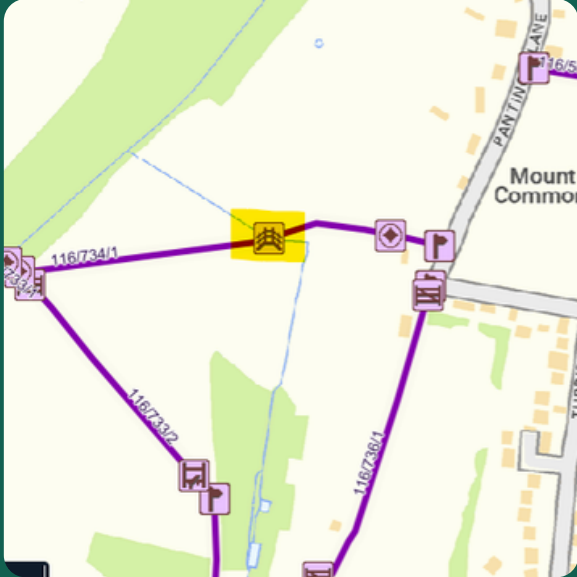


# Access Team Highlights

## North West

### Highclere Ditch Crossing

#### Footpath 734



Another heatwave doesn't stop us.

At the top of the county, with the sun blazing down, Ali and Amber were joined by five dedicated volunteers to install a new ditch crossing along Footpath 734. Since December, the site had been sporting a rather fetching plywood cover.

The volunteers wasted no time removing the old crossing and loading it into the trailer for disposal. With the easy part out of the way, attention turned to installing the new structure. However, the ground had other ideas. Battling the "ghosts of ditch crossings past" and exceptionally hard ground, the team soon realised that this would be no straightforward task.

Thankfully, once everyone had "listened to Barry", who has installed more than 20 crossings since becoming a volunteer, progress picked up quickly. The bearers were soon in place and the sleepers installed before lunch.





# Access Team Highlights

## North West

### Highclere Ditch Crossing Continued

#### Footpath 734



After a well-earned break, work resumed on digging the post holes. The ground was as hard as concrete and, in one spot, there was even actual concrete to break through.

Despite the challenging conditions and the relentless heat, the team persevered, and by just after 2pm a beautiful new ditch crossing had been successfully completed.

A huge thank you to everyone who helped. It was an exceptionally hot day, with no shade over the crossing site.



BEFORE



Highclere  
Ditch  
Crossing

AFTER

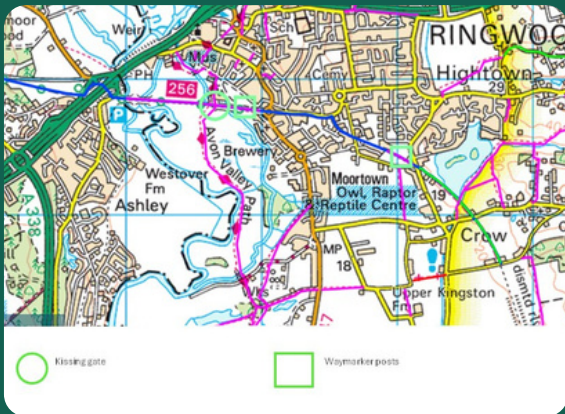




# Access Team Highlights

## South West

### Castleman Trailway (CTW) Improvements



## BEFORE



At the beginning of August CER Kate was joined by several South West Access Team volunteers, as well as those from Ringwood and Fordingbridge Footpath Society to start some of the improvements on the CTW in Ringwood.

The work is funded by New Forest District Council (NFDC) from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and will enhance the trail with new signage, information boards and benches, making it easier and more enjoyable to explore.

Kate has been working with the Hampshire Countryside Projects Team who have hired a contractor to carry out some of the work, with Kate and volunteers picking up some of the smaller tasks to make the money go as far as possible.

The CTW stretches for approximately 18 miles from Crow in the New Forest to Upton Country Park in Poole, on a predominantly level surface following the old railway line as closely as possible. These improvements will enhance and encourage walking and cycling for both leisure and everyday journeys from Ringwood and surrounding areas.

We started by installing a couple of way marker posts at junctions with suitable CTW waymarker discs. I hadn't really factored in that the path would be on the old railway bed, so digging was even worse than expected and the heat didn't help!

The route is a mixture of public rights of way and permissive paths, and the way marking is a welcome addition ensuring continuity with the Dorset section to the West.



# Access Team Highlights

## South West Castleman Trailway (CTW) Improvements Continued

### DURING



### AFTER



The next day we headed to the Bickerley, at the junction of the Avon Valley Path (AVP) and the CTW to remove a very dilapidated stile and replace it with a shiny new kissing gate.

The stile had been concreted in and was adorned with several uprights of railway track. This was never going to be easy to remove, and in doing so we would have compromised the stability of the landowner's field gate. With the landowner's permission we agreed to remove the stile and block up that access and reposition the gate on the other side of the field gate.

Waymarkers were added for both the AVP and the CTW, and before we had even packed away our tools the gate was in use!

This busy stretch of the CTW is popular with walkers and cyclists and they were all very appreciative of the improvements 😊

Look out for more updates in the next few months including a bridge repair, finger posts, interpretation panel and benches!

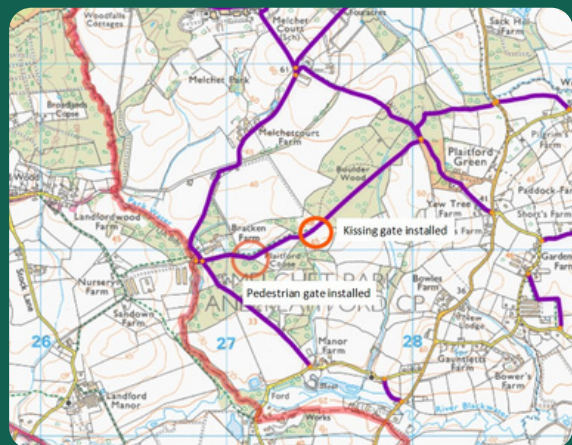




# Access Team Highlights

## South West

### Beating the Heat to Improve Access in Plaitford



BEFORE

Plaitford  
Path 156/7/2

AFTER

BEFORE

Plaitford  
Path 156/7/2

AFTER

In sweltering 34°C heat, five dedicated volunteers from the Romsey Ramblers Maintenance Team headed to Bracken Farm, Plaitford to install two new access gates as part of a project to improve the footpath network.

The project began when the landowner sought advice from Hampshire County Council (HCC) about moving field boundaries, a change that affected two existing stiles and left another redundant. What followed was a fantastic example of partnership working. The landowner supplied a kissing gate, HCC provided a pedestrian gate, and members of the Romsey Ramblers Maintenance Team volunteered their time and expertise to carry out the installations.

Given the challenging conditions and the prospect of digging into baked-hard ground, the work was expected to take two days. However, thanks to the team's determination and excellent teamwork, both gates were successfully installed in a single session!

The successful completion of this project brings a lasting benefit to the local community, opening up the possibility of attractive circular, stile-free walks from Sherfield English and making the countryside more accessible for everyone to enjoy.

Well done to all involved for delivering such a positive outcome in exceptionally challenging conditions.





# Access Team Highlights

## North East

### Busting out the Baughurst Bridges



To further improve Baughurst, CER Andy was joined by the North East volunteers to tick another ditch crossing off the list, making the most of the dry weather conditions in this notoriously boggy part of Hampshire.

With a curious audience of a few horses and their decidedly unwelcome horse flies, the team worked incredibly efficiently, removing the old bridge with precision and ease while maintaining a watchful eye on their blood loss to these exceptionally annoying insects.

After multiple mathematical headaches caused by fitting a fully spec'd bridge into a space that previously held one half its size, the main sleeper deck was miraculously in place and right on schedule for lunch.

Following a spot of lunch in the sunshine, well away from the six-legged, flying, vampiric carnivores lurking in the woods, the team completed the installation of the ditch crossing without any further hurdles and were finished by 2 o'clock.

A huge **THANK YOU** to the volunteers who gave their blood, sweat and occasional sanity to this Rights of Way improvement!





# Access Team Highlights

## North East

### Paving the Way Through Upton Grey



Once Upton a time, footpath 10 in the parish of Upton Grey was accessible and, according to our Rights of Way map, it still was.

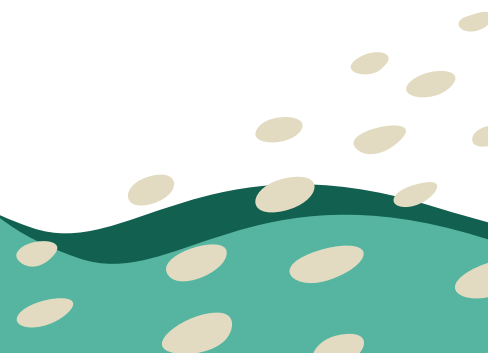
That was not the case upon inspection at the two marked locations shown on the map.

This month, CER Andy called in reinforcements to correct nature's course and reclaim what had been taken from us.

Over the course of three days, Andy was joined by North East volunteers with the mindset of warriors. Together, they practically moved the earth itself, recreating a footpath where one had seemingly disappeared.

On the first day, the volunteers split into two teams, each bringing a different set of skills to the challenge. They battled through the thickest wilderness to reclaim the foundations of Footpath 10, restoring a route that had long since been swallowed by the wilderness.

On the second day, Andy was joined by a small band of volunteers, masters in the art of brush cutting.





# Access Team Highlights

## North East

### Paving the Way Through Upton Grey Continued



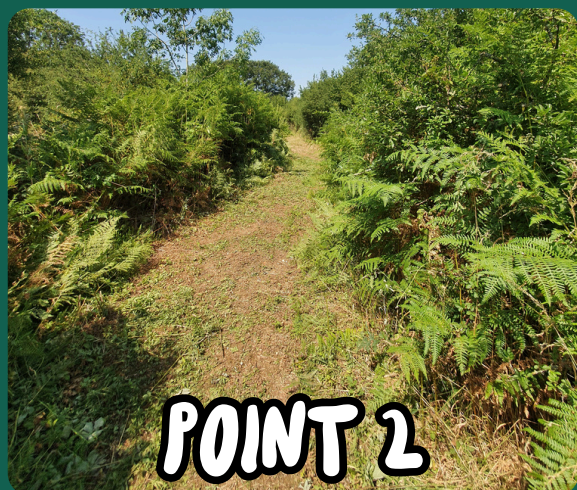
Armed with blades of fury and finesse, they set upon the remaining stretch of the route, cutting back every stray bramble bold enough to stand in their way.

As order emerged from the previous day's wilderness, their efforts revealed a crisp and well-defined footpath, standing as a testament to their hard work.

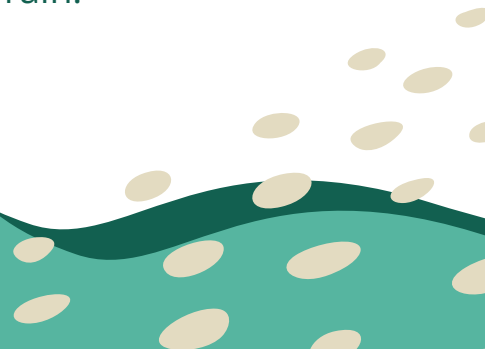
On the third and final day, these warriors truly left their mark on the landscape.



With the route already reclaimed from the wilderness, the team set about bending the earth to their will. Carving into the steep boundary verge at Point 1, they forged a stable, level and highly maintainable path, transforming a challenging hillside of ankle-straining angles into a route where the only incline left was the natural rise and fall of the hill itself.



'Twas a battle worthy of legend in the war of Footpath 10, and our band of volunteer warriors deserve a huge thank you for their determination, hard work and refusal to be defeated by brambles, slopes and stubborn terrain.





# Access Team Highlights

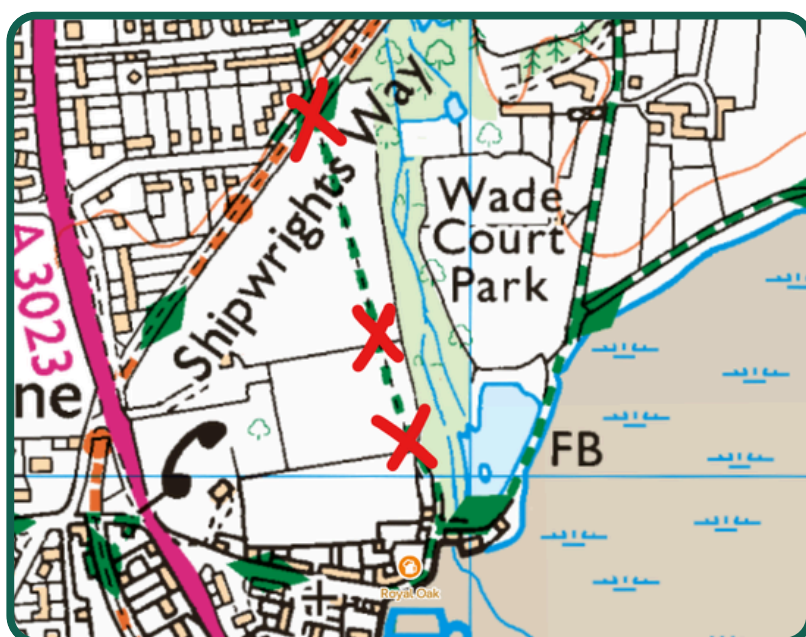
## South East

### Improvements on Havant 54b



Last month, Access volunteers helped complete the multi-stage improvement project on Havant footpath 108/54b/1. This path connects the Billy Trail to the England Coast Path (ECP), and the constant flow of footpath traffic during our task days was testament to its popularity!

In June, we upgraded the existing kissing gates with two-way opening pedestrian gates instead; allowing footpath users with prams, buggies or wheelchairs to enjoy the route.





# Access Team Highlights

## South East

### Improvements on Havant 54b Continued

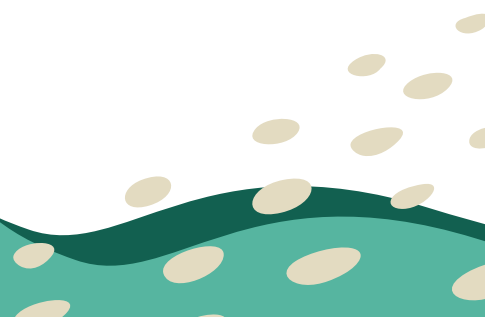
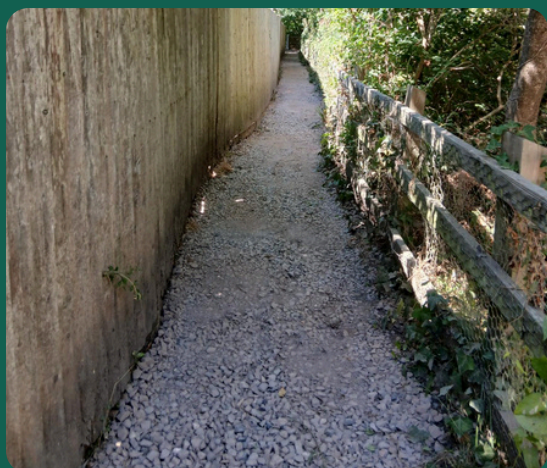


As if that wasn't enough, the team came back in August to re-surface the southernmost 70m and make life easier for walkers in winter when the path is usually dotted with unavoidable puddles.



Despite the heat and 4 loads of scalping material delivered, the volunteers worked like a swarm of locusts, making efficient work of the aggregate pile.

Thank you so much to everyone who came along to either day, and especially to those who came to both!





# Access Team Highlights

## South East

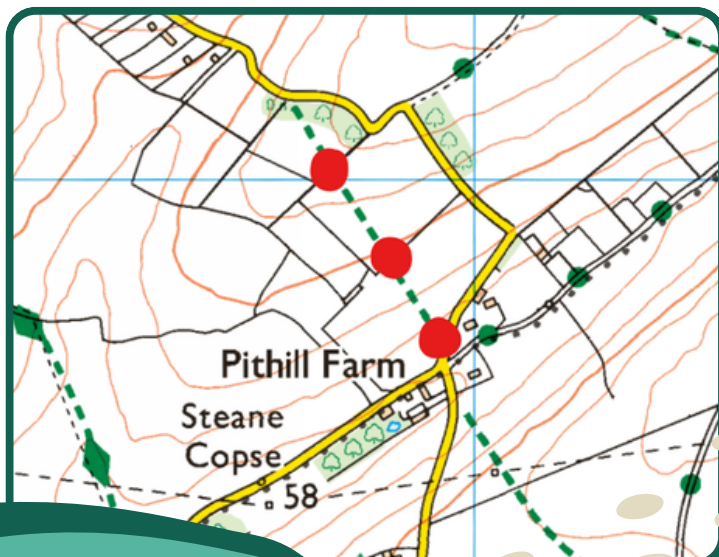
### Three Stiles to Gates on Hambledon 29



Miles without Stiles continues; last month we replaced 3 stiles with gates on Hambledon footpath 29 with the help of the Hampshire Monday Group (HMG) and Access volunteers. Hambledon's infamously flinty soil is made all the more enjoyable after being baked dry this summer, so digging was particularly hard work.

While working on these new gates, the adjoining landowner came over for a chat and wanted to jump on board the Miles without Stiles train to replace their 2 stiles further up the path – so soon the whole footpath will be stile free.

Thank you to the Hampshire Monday Group and Access volunteers who came along to help – you all sacrificed a good deal of sweat to the cause! A special thanks also goes to the landowner who kindly moved the cattle and allowed us access in to the field for the works.





# Annual Volunteer Thank You Events

Our annual volunteer thank you events are a bit later than usual due to scheduling conflicts and difficulties finding a venue - but we've got the dates locked in for sure this time and you are all invited!

It's impossible to organise a single day and single location that works for everyone, so we have created two identical events in the hope that one of them works for you.

Monday 19th October - in the Casson Room at Queen Elizabeth Country Park (QECP) 1pm – 3pm

Tuesday 20th October - in the Barn at Old Basing 1pm – 3pm

Whether you're a Path Warden, task day volunteer or independent group, we want to express our appreciation in the best way we know how - cake! If you've been to one of our Thank You events before then you know the legendary amount of baked goods on offer 😊

Everyone who has helped the Public Right of Way network across Hampshire is invited, so please pass this on to other members of your volunteer group who might not be on our direct mailing list 😊  
For more information or to book a space at one of the events, please use the Eventbrite link below:  
[Volunteer Thank You Event](#)

We look forward to seeing you there!





# Your CER Team

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## Thank you for your continued support

